

RUTH'S CONTRACT

By Max Marcin



M. LEON
BRACKER

She Began the Wonderful Descriptive Composition.

COMING, as they did, through the open window of the grimy shell of a building, the wooing strains of the violin surprised the senses as would the song of the thrush purling from the throat of a crow. The house from which the notes issued seemed a shade darker than its neighbors in the grim aspect of its poverty. Everything about it bore the sign of sure decay. Brick and mortar were on the verge of parting. Long scars showed in the weather-worn walls, which appeared ready to crumble under the slightest tremor. A reddish rust coated the grated basement door, nestled in the cracks of the ironwork, and lay thick on all the shutter hinges. The glass was flecked with dirt and soot, through which the light squirmed and struggled. Thick layers of dust were everywhere, giving the place a sickly appearance, repulsive and forbidding. Behind the shabby neglect of this exterior one could expect to find only a bitter, consuming poverty, unlighted by a flicker of sentiment.

Yet there flowed through the window a melody so clear, so fresh, so vigorous in its appeal, as to draw one's attention irresistibly to the source of this streamy harmony. The little knot of men and women who listened to the melodious outpouring from places of vantage on the steps and sidewalk, saw two figures outlined in the murky light of the room level with the stoop.

One was a woman's figure, full, rounded; but the face that bent above the violin supported under her chin was that of a girl. She swayed rhythmically from side to side, displaying her features under alternate changes of light and shade. Her skin was dark, with that peculiar live deep tint often found in the Polish Jewess. Her head, big and broad, was well proportioned to her body. She wore her black hair of coarse fiber parted in the middle and knotted at the back. The wide expanse of slightly bulging brow denoted wilfulness and a latent impetuosity behind the docility with which she followed the prompting of the man standing close to her shoulder.

His figure was tall and slightly bent, as if the weight of the big head had caused the spinal column to curve. His drooping white hair showed lack of care and fell disheveled over his shoulders. The cheeks were shrunken beneath the prominent cheekbones, giving the nose an elongated appearance which made it seem too big for the face. His drawn lips, somewhat weak, were counterbalanced by a full, strong chin. Two big clear eyes shone with vivid light beneath a square brow furrowed with care.

As they stood there, the girl's bow sweeping the strings of the fiddle with sure touch, the man beating

time with a lead pencil, they seemed like beings apart from their environment. The lines of their faces were drawn to deep seriousness, the seriousness of concentrated purpose, and their eyes, charged with the message of their souls, radiated a light that carried them high above the bleakness of the surrounding tenements, on to a luminous orbit round which they revolved as in a halo of glory.

They were dreamers, these two, father and daughter, always with a rainbow to pursue, always with the mirage of fame looming in the distance. Feeding on disappointments, enduring poverty without a murmur, the course of their lives flowed in a straight channel which they hoped one day would penetrate the obstacles that stood in the way of recognition of their greatness. In the father patience had become a habit; in the daughter it was a manifestation of filial obedience. If she felt occasionally a rebellious twinge, a desire to mingle in the world about her, it was soon suppressed in her love for her father. Thus they lived in their dark hole of a home, in the midst of the seething, struggling East Side, in it but out of touch with the movement of the main stream.

THE father, always alert and watchful where his daughter was concerned, was resentful of any intrusion of the petty hopes and aspirations of a sordid world into the vibrant dream life in which he and his daughter moved. Just at present, the particular object of his resentment was Julius Samuels,

only son and future heir of Samuels, proprietor of the Golden Fleece Restaurant on Grand-st. And young Samuels, writhing in the coils of a love that he found no opportunity to express, attributed the watchfulness of the father to a selfishness that flowed consistently from the well of avarice.

"She's earning money for old man Altchewski," he said many times to the old patrons of his father's restaurant; "so why should he want to see her married?"

"And without the consent of the parent, let not the daughter choose a husband," the elder Samuels was fond of quoting; "for she will bring to his home the curse of a child's disobedience."

YOUNG Samuels' feelings were uncertain as he skirted the group of men and women listening to the music in front of the musician's home and made his way to Altchewski's apartment. As he stood for a moment in the aperture of the half-open door, a diamond glittering in a circle of dull granite could not have thrown more contrasting brightness than he diffused. In his perfectly tailored gray checked suit, his faultlessly adjusted blue tie, his stiff bosomed colored shirt, the gold linked cuffs of which peeked from the coat sleeve, he was a picture of prosperity in this dingy setting of poverty. The glance that he cast at the girl was brimful of affection. As he watched her, he thought he saw her eyes shine with answering gladness. The music from the fiddle stopped abruptly and the instrument dropped to her side.

"Didn't I tell you to keep away from here?" the father burst forth in Yiddish.

"Sure," responded Julius placidly. "Sure, you told me to keep away. Don't I know it well enough? But I thought I'd just drop around with some good news, something I thought you'd like to hear."

The old man's eyes narrowed suspiciously on his daughter. "Go in there!" he commanded, waving his hand in the direction of the two bedrooms. She obeyed meekly.

"Go on! Hide your Ruth from me!" Samuels blurted. "I ain't fit to set eyes on her! I'm not good enough for her—oh, no! She's got such a big dowry she can look up to marrying a millionaire! Maybe some day a manufacturer or a financier will come along and marry her! Nit! The fiddler in my father's restaurant is too proud to give her hand to her employer's son!"

"That's the good news, is it, that you brought?" the old man questioned.

"Bah!" retorted Samuels scornfully. "You ain't

worth I shall give it to you. But I'll tell you anyhow—just because of Ruth. She'll be glad to hear it."

"Well, what is it? A raise in pay?" demanded the father.

"It's better than a raise," Samuels replied. "The lady from up town telephoned to have a table for six reserved for to-night. She's coming down with Bauer, with Bauer," he emphasized, "and she wants Ruth to be sure to play your composition, 'Children of Israel,' for him!"

The news squeezed all the anger out of Altchewski. The lines of his face relaxed, a pleasant dreaminess crept over his features. "Ruth, Ruth!" he called. "You may come in. Did you hear? The lady from up town has kept her promise. Bauer will hear you play to-night. Our day has come!"

Ruth found her father pacing up and down the room in an ecstasy of anticipation. His mind leaped skyward, high above the clouds, into a heaven of happiness which resounded with the triumph of Altchewski.

"My genius will be transmitted to the world through you," he said to the daughter, returning to earth for a moment. "Now we shall receive the reward of our struggles."

"Remember the miseries of delusive expectation," cautioned Samuels.

"Delusive, delusive!" gasped the composer. "No longer delusive! They will be realized to-night. My daughter will leave the ruck of the eating house for the higher sphere of art, and I—I will be hailed as the great composer. Ruth," he murmured, "our emancipation is at hand. He has only to hear you, to recognize your genius. You will not be a restaurant fiddler much longer."

Enwrapped in his fancy, the father was unconscious of the soft radiance his daughter shed on Samuels. When he became aware of the young man's presence again, he forgot his antipathy for the suitor, in his gratitude to the messenger who had brought the good news that Bauer, leader of the Philharmonic, would hear Ruth play the composition of her father.

"Now do you see how ridiculous it is for you to hope to win her?" Altchewski declared. "Don't you see why she cannot tie herself to you? You're a good young man, in your own way; but she's an artist, a genius, my daughter and my pupil. We have the soul of the musician; that's the soul of the poet. You have the gross soul of the eating house man. You cannot help it; for our God has ordained it so."

"Rats!" growled the young man derisively as he left.

SAMUELS, proprietor of the Golden Fleece restaurant, surveyed the long room of his eating house, at the same time smiling a welcome on the diners who began to straggle in. The place had undergone a pleasant transformation in the last six months. The red wall paper had given way to panels of ivory and gold with borders of entwined leaves framing the painted cherubs disporting on downy clouds. Clusters of electric lights, peering from behind paper foliage, replaced the old battered chandeliers and shed their subdued beams on the glistening polish of the new chairs, on the unworn carpet, and on the round tables, immaculately white with their covers of new linen.

The sun of prosperity was shining on Samuels. Steadily he had raised the price of his meals from thirty-five cents to seventy-five, thereby edging out the old customers and gathering to himself the elite of the East Side,—the young lawyers, doctors, manufacturers, shopkeepers, and a sprinkling of the higher paid musicians, Yiddish journalists, and actors. Also, automobiles stopped not infrequently in front of the door and deposited parties from up town.

With the genial familiarity of the restaurant man toward his regular patrons, Samuels sat down at a table at which a group of five was struggling with the soup.

"Well," he began abstractedly, "I picked up a beggar and I found a genius."

"Apropos of what?" drawled Pincus the poet, whose verses, published in pamphlet form, had a phenomenal sale.

Samuels jerked his thumb in the direction of the little platform at one end of the room. Ruth was seated near the piano, the violin in her hand, waiting to play her first number. Being the virtuoso of the place, she played only five solos each night, the rest of the music being furnished by a violinist, a cellist, a German whose thick fingers swept the strings of a harp with surprising nimbleness, and a pianist. Altchewski sat dreamily at a table near the platform.

"Get it out of your head she's a genius," remarked Zits, editor of "The Jewish Mirror." "Just a clever musician—there are lots of them on the East Side. Is it true that Bauer is coming here to-night with ladies from up town?"

Samuels indicated a table ornamented with vases of flowers as proof of Bauer's expected visit.

"He'll pick so many flaws in her playing," pro-

nounced Zits, "that there'll be nothing left of her genius. And as for Altechewski's 'Children of Israel,' he'll not understand it because it is unintelligible to anyone but a Jew."

"You'll be paying good money to hear her in Carnegie Hall," pronounced Samuels. "And, what's more," he added slyly, "I'll not send you passes."

"Oh, a manager!" sneered the editor. "You were doing a kind deed when you gave her a job at ten dollars a week and put her under contract for five years. I suppose if she does get recognition from Bauer you'll hold her to the contract?"

"Bet your life I will!" replied Samuels. "I'll sell the restaurant and be her manager."

"Will you raise her pay?" inquired Koplovitch, who carried the palm and citron from house to house during the Succoth holidays.

"I took a chance of paying her salary for five

years," Samuels responded: "so why shouldn't I get the benefit of my luck? It was a gamble when I put her under contract, and I win."

"And soon, I suppose, she'll be under contract to Julius, under a marriage contract to stay in the family, eh?"

Samuels looked thoughtfully to where Julius was seated. The son had drawn a chair close to the reserved table, to the one at which Mrs. Stevenson, society leader, patron of music, and settlement worker, had invited Bauer. He sat there to overhear the comments of the great orchestra leader, to listen to the pronouncement of Ruth's genius.

After the guests from up town arrived, Altechewski came over and with a show of cordiality joined Julius, careful at the same time to move his chair to within a foot of Bauer's position at the table.

Ruth had finished her second number, a Beetho-

ven sonata played as an encore to a Hungarian rhapsody. When the applause died out, Julius and Altechewski bent forward eagerly to listen to the words of the great Bauer.

"Faultless technic," Bauer commented to Mrs. Stevenson; "but she lacks in the element of feeling. I've heard a hundred others like her, fine musicians, possible possessors of the divine spark, but undeveloped."

"Then you don't think she'll do? I haven't made a great discovery after all?" questioned Mrs. Stevenson.

"Can't tell," Bauer responded. "It may be that her soul has the fire to carry her to the height necessary for the great concert stage; it may be she is lacking in it. However, the chances are she is under the baneful influence of some teacher whose idea is

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A FOLLOW UP ON FLUDD

By Sewell Ford

Drawings by F. Vaux Wilson

SAY, next time anyone wants to put up a statue that'll show out of town folks a composite picture of what we think our leadin' citizen ought to look like, I'll provide a model. It won't be any lady blacksmith, with a 'shield and a two-edged carvin' knife, like they put up in Longacre Square last election time, either. It'll be a life size figure of Larson Fludd. And there won't be any mistakin' what it's meant for.

Maybe you don't know this Fludd party yet. Don't worry; you will. There's some things you can't escape in this burg, and Larson Fludd's one of 'em. I've got to admit, though, that up to a few weeks ago I hadn't even heard of him. I'd been gettin' along first rate too, satisfied that I'd seen about all kinds of New Yorkers there was to see, and glad I'd seen some of 'em first.

It happens one mild, quiet afternoon when we were gettin' our first sample of spring weather, and Swifty Joe and me was feelin' calm and contented after a good day's business workin' the lazy germs out of some of our Wall Street reg'lars.

I'd heard that heavy tread comin' up the stairs; but I thought it was some truckman carryin' a trunk up to the third floor. Next I hears some one grab the door handle of the front office and give it a yank. As that partic'lar door happens to open in instead of out, the only result is to shake the partition. Another yank rattles the glass and makes the door casing creak, and we was just rushin' to rescue the wood-work, when the party on the outside discovers the combination and comes slammin' in.

And, say, it's lucky he didn't give one more pull, or there'd been a new door to buy; for he's one of these Ajax built gents, big and broad and beefy, with all the graceful lines of a grain elevator and some suggestions of a steam derrick about him. When it comes to width and height he had our husky friend Jeffries lookin' like a hundred-yard sprinter, and all that size rigged out in the latest Broadway regalia, with a swell English raincoat draped over one arm, and yellow gloves on a pair of hands as dainty as a couple of sacked hams. He has one of these rough cast, stockyards faces, with hair in his ears, a Sharky neck, bushy eyebrows, and a crinkly, wiry mustache that grows down on either side of his mouth like inverted horns. Oh, he was a delicate, gentle specimen, he was!

"Say," says I, "if you don't like the way that door opens, just bend the hinges to suit yourself. We're here to please."

"Huh!" he grunts out. "I can pay for any damage I do. Where's Professor McCabe?"

"Lookin' you between the eyes," says I.

"Oh! So you're the one, eh?" says he, sizin' me up from under them eyebrow thickets of his about as friendly as a dog with a bone in his mouth. "Huh!"

"Thanks," says I. "I'm glad you're so pleased to meet me. Now, if there's anything else we can—"

"I want to take a look at your shop," says he.

"Swifty," says I, "open the gym door—wide."

AND do you think any repartee like that gets a rise out of Ajax? Not at all. It don't even tickle his skin. He stalks into the next room, tramps over the mats, pokes a finger at the punchin' bag, and examines the other apparatus kind of scornful. Then he grunts once more.

"Those playthings are all right, I suppose," says he; "but what have you got for a man who wants real exercise; wants to let off steam, you know?"

"Our house wreckin' and blacksmithin' departments haven't been fitted up yet," says I. "We're just worryin' along with what we've got here."

"Well," says he, "I need exercise, something I can let myself go on. Do some boxing too, don't you?"

"Now and then a bit," says I.

"Guess that would about suit me," says he.

"Sorry," says I; "but there's a vacancy in the heavyweight chair just now."

"Do you mean," says he, "that there's no one around the place I can box with?"

"You've stated the proposition," says I.

"Ahr chee!" says Swifty in that husky whisper of his. "Lemme at him!"

"Mr. Gallagher," says I, "go out and read the employer's liability act."

At that the gent chuckles. It wa'n't one of these good natured chuckles either, but a kind of cross between a bull snort and a hyena snicker. "So you're afraid, eh?" says he.

"Say, Mr. Man," says I, "you can call it showin' the yellow, or anything else you like; but it goes. Your application is declined, without regrets."

"Well, well!" says he, showin' his teeth. "I knew you were a has-been; but I didn't think you'd lost your nerve altogether. And all I was after was—"

"You'll get it!" says I. "Swifty, bring a set of them six-ounce mitts."

HONEST, I couldn't have kept my hands off him another minute; for his society was about as soothin' to me as soapsuds in the eye. Maybe it was nutty of me to work up a prejudice like that all at a jump, me not knowin' the man from a load of raw hides; but I knew his breed. He's the kind you see doin' the subway hog act durin' rush hours, jammin' women up against the gates when they get in his way, workin' his elbows on whoever is next, and spreadin' himself out comf'table in two seats while shopgirls are swingin' on the straps. Yes, there was a lot comin' to him. Besides, he'd almost begged for it.

"Changed your mind, have you?" says he. "That suits me."

Well, we both proceeds to shed our coats and col-



We Was Just Rushin' to Rescue the Woodwork, When He Discovers the Combination and Comes Slammin' In.

lars and striped shirts, and when he rolls up his sleeves, revealin' a fore arm like a hind quarter of beef, Swifty's eyes begin to stick out.

"If he ever lands one on you," whispers Swifty, "it's me for jumpin' in with an Indian club."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," says I. "You stand prepared to ring up an ambulance for the one that needs it."

"I'm ready," says the gent.

"Two- or three-minute rounds?" says I.

"Oh, let's just keep at it until one of us loses his breath," says he careless.

"Good!" says I. "Let 'er go!"

Say, he'd been there before, this duck had, as was plain by the way he holds himself, and I begun to wonder if some one wa'n't springin' a ringer on me. Nothing fancy about his style, you know, no crouches or scientific footwork; but he bores in more or less businesslike.

IT'S an animated proceedin', from the drop of the hat. His half-arm punches come in like taps from a pile driver, and every time I block one of his swings I'm lifted clean off the floor. Givin' him an openin' for a body blow or an upper cut was about as safe as lettin' yourself get bumped by a trolley car; so it's me for the lightnin' duck and the hasty backward hop.

Kind of annoyed him, I guess, wastin' all that energy on the atmosphere; so he tries rushin' in to drive one home where he could feel something firm. And that's where I has a chance to plant a face stinger or so in the fraction of a second before I jumps out of range. That only stirs him up, though, and next thing I know he's comin' at me, eager and vicious. It was either a case of bein' wiped off the boards right then and there, or negotiatin' the jab of a lifetime. And I gives my whole attention to that jab.

Course, findin' the spot to place it was a cinch; for there's his right guardin' his wind, and his left pulled back for the swing, and all I has to do is shoot it over quick. Gettin' it in hard enough to stop that rush was the serious part of the problem; but I braces both feet solid, throws my shoulder forward to follow the punch, and steams it on his jaw for every ounce that was in me.

AND even then it ain't a real finished performance, nothing like these wonderful knockouts you read about or see in the moving picture dramas. There's a ker-chunk sort of noise, his arms and chin go up, he whirls halfway round and back again, wabbles first one way and then the other, and fin'ly drops on his hands and knees to think it over and let the fireworks subside.

"Any time when you're ready again," says I.

He makes a desp'rate stab at gettin' on his feet; but it's no go. I expect the room was spinnin' round too fast.

"I—I'm much obliged," he pants out, "but—but not to-day!"

And with that me and Swifty helps him into a chair and swabs him off. He don't say much while he's waitin' for his head to steady down, nor even after he starts gettin' his things on. I could see, though, he was tryin' to get out something half decent in the way of conversation, but don't know how.

"I—er—I suppose I should have paid more attention to what my friend Gordon told me about you," says he at last.

"What, Pyramid Gordon?" says I. "Did he send you here? Well, say, if I'd known that, I wouldn't have—"

"It's all right," says he. "That's just the sort of thing I need once in awhile. My name is Fludd, Larson Fludd, and you can put me down for Tuesday and Friday afternoons regular."

"Same kind of game?" says I.

"Certainly," says he.

"Excuse me," says I, "but that's too much like

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Ruth's Contract

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that music is the only thing a great musician need know. She needs to broaden out. To interpret love, one has to experience the joys and disappointments of love. It is the same with the other great emotions; she must have opportunity to experience them. At present she is interpreting the emotions of her teacher, and naturally they sound weak and diluted."

The words were to Julius like a healing balm. Instead of losing Ruth in the great world of art in which he was a stranger, he saw his opportunity and he seized it tremulously.

"See, see!" he muttered, gripping Alchewski's wrist. "See what you've done for her! Your selfishness has made her genius commonplace. Bauer knows what's the matter. You've kept Ruth imprisoned in her home. She needs to broaden, to know what love is, before she can play love music. Now if you'll give your consent and let me propose—"

"Hush!" commanded the father; for Ruth had begun the opening bars of his "Children of Israel." It was a descriptive composition, in which the light of the composer's inspiration stretched over centuries of thought and over the life of a race. It opened with the plaintive yearning of a race in bondage and developed into the measured tread of the march out of Egypt. Then came the hopeful periods of the Promised Land and the walls of disappointment at the scattering of the tribes. The melody carried the solemn chants of the Day of Atonement, the wistfulness of the children's love, and the sobbings of family partings, the crash of disasters, and the low murmurings and heavy breaths of the race gasping under long bitter persecution. Out of it all the climax gathered with cumulative force, until with quick movements it expressed the coming of the Messiah, when the dead shall rise and the Children of Israel move in glory before the throne of the Almighty.

WHEN she had finished, when the last note of the stirring climax had become a vibrating memory, there was a great outburst of applause. Julius and Alchewski looked anxiously at Bauer. He sat silent, his arms folded, his face inscrutable. Suddenly the leader seemed to come out of his abstraction; for with a jerky movement he rose from the chair, walked over to the platform, and gripped the musician's hand. In a moment the leader and the girl were surrounded by a group which contained Julius, Alchewski, and the elder Samuels.

"Great!" Bauer commented. "You understood that music; you felt it in your blood. It was the outpouring of centuries of tradition of which your soul is knitted. I want you to play this, just this number, at the Philharmonic concert."

Alchewski felt a quick leap of his heart; Julius experienced a corresponding sinking of hope.

"I am the composer," the old musician said, pressing forward. "I am her father. You understood the music; you recognized our combined genius."

"Of course," Bauer remarked placidly to the father, "if your daughter is to appear with the Philharmonic, she must give up her position in the restaurant. But we will take care of that."

"Give it up! Give up her position here!" exclaimed the father in an outburst of joy. "Never again shall she play here! We are through with the eating house forever!"

It was the elder Samuels, smiling and suave, who now stepped between Bauer and the composer. "You seem to forget," he said, nodding to Alchewski, "that I have a contract. It has four years more to run. Of course, you can fix it with me," he remarked to Bauer, "to have her play for you. You can pay me—"

"You'd keep her chained to you—you with the soul of a tradesman?" shouted the enraged father. "You'd tie her to your place when she can take her rank among the great musicians? Contract or no contract, she shall not play here again! She will play in Carnegie Hall, where she belongs. Come, Ruth!" he commanded, and leading her by the hand he started for the door.

"You ingrate!" blurted Samuels. "You beggar with the soul of a beggar! I kept you from starving!"

"At ten dollars a week," interjected Samuels, as he fairly pushed the daughter through the door.

OUTSIDE they found Julius hanging close to their heels. "Go away, son of a glut-ton!" the old man commanded.

But Julius didn't heed. Instead he followed them to their home, pouring the torrent of his love into Ruth's ear. The father placed the daughter's arm in his and hastened his footsteps. He cursed the suitor, hurled maledictions at his parent, and vowed he would sooner see Ruth dead than married to the son of the restaurant man. He slammed the door of the apartment in Julius's face, and, alone with Ruth, he shot another volley of abuse at the absent Samuels and his son.

Ruth didn't hear. Tears dropped from the corners of her eyes and rolled under her chin. "I hate it! I hate it!" she exclaimed, dropping the violin box on the sofa.

The old man's eyes expanded in surprise.

"I'm sick of it all," she cried. "Sick of it! I've been a dutiful daughter. I have always obeyed you, stayed with you when my soul yearned to go out among the others, those of my own age. For nearly a year Julius and I have looked at each other in the restaurant like two dummies, with you keeping us apart. You heard him say he loves me. He wants



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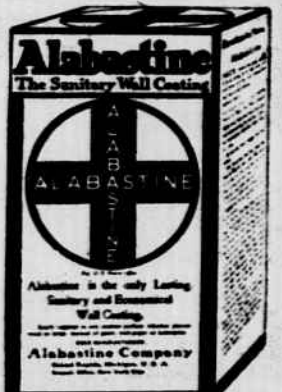
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to marry me. I love him. What do I care about the contract? After this I will speak to him. I will tell him I love him, whether you like it or not!"

She had burst the paternal bonds, her latent strength had asserted itself. And, overcome by the violence of her outburst, she threw herself on the bed, the instincts of the musician submerged beneath her newfound womanhood.

DINGIER than ever before seemed the Alchewski home the following morning. Its gaping poverty exhaled a breath of misery more harrowing than want. A gloomy barrier had sprung up between father and daughter.

"So this is the end of the years of waiting, of deprivation, of hard effort!" Alchewski said moodily. "Just when fame is within reach you want to tie your soul to a couple of wolves—as if you weren't tied to the father already! You have forgotten the obligation you owe your parent, to your father who made you what you are."

"A ten-dollar a week restaurant fiddler!" came from a voice. At the same time the door opened and Julius entered the room. He was followed close behind by his father. Their presence enraged the old composer. He bounded from his seat and, shaking his fist at them, exclaimed:

"Yes, a restaurant fiddler! She played for you to keep the wolf from the door, and she finds herself in the jaws of a couple of wolves. You think you're going to make money out of her! Well, you won't! She'll not play in your place again, and I'll see her hand paralyzed before I let it earn a penny for you!"

Young Samuels and Ruth sidled close to each other, while the two fathers glared in undisguised hatred into each other's eyes.

"You were starving and I put bread into your mouths!" Samuels retorted. "Now you don't care whether you take the bread out of mine!"

"Yes, you gave us the bread we earned," cried Alchewski. "Now you want a pound of flesh in addition!"

"Look here, Alchewski!" Samuels retorted. "A contract is a contract. You were glad enough to let your Ruth sign it when it assured you five years of food and rent. I got a note from Bauer this morning. He wants to hear Ruth play again. He wants to find out more fully what she can do. There is a great opening for her, and I want to talk the whole thing over sensibly with you. I want you to listen to reason. I'm entitled to a whole lot for what I've done for you, for the chance I gave her—"

"You're entitled to nothing," interrupted the old man. "She's made you prosperous. You weren't earning a decent living out of your cheap restaurant until she played for you. It was her playing that drew the customers. You didn't even have the decency to raise her pay."

"A bargain is a bargain," declared Samuels.

IT IS! suddenly broke in the younger Samuels. The fathers, in their excited colloquy, had not observed Ruth and Julius slip into the dark kitchen. They emerged now, radiant and smiling, and faced their parents.

"We have just struck another bargain," Julius said. "We are going to get married."

"Never, never!" cried Alchewski, his voice rising to a thin rasp. "Not while I live will I see my daughter married to the son of a thief! Yes, a thief! He has taken our birthright and refused to give it back!"

"No, it is you who are robbing your daughter of her birthright," corrected Julius. "You heard what Bauer said. You have kept her confined; you have prevented her soul from expanding. Now it will grow big and beautiful, and when she plays for Bauer again he will see that she can play other things besides the 'Children of Israel.'"

The girl smiled into the face of her betrothed and he impulsively kissed her lips. The smack was like a dagger thrust to Alchewski.

"If she marries you the curse of the undutiful child will ever remain in your household," he said. "I'll never give my consent."

The determined tone of the old man sent a shudder down the frames of the young lovers. To them the wrath of the father was freighted with the displeasure of the Almighty. No luck could ever be theirs while they lived under the cloud of a father's unforgiveness. That belief was part of the heritage of their race.

"If I am willing to let my son marry your daughter," asked the elder Samuels, "why are you unwilling to let Ruth, who has no dowry, marry a son who is able to give her comforts she never had before?"

Alchewski did not reply. Instead he turned toward his daughter. "Ruth," he snarled, "you with the soul of the poet, transmitted to you from your father, you with the fire of genius, how can you marry into a family whose father is a gross trafficker in food, who is so devoid of the finer instincts, such as belong to us, as to hold you to a contract that confines your talent to his eating house? Shame on you!"

ALTCHEWSKI, retorted Samuels, "I'll not permit my son to bring the curse of a father into his home; but if it's the contract that causes you to withhold your consent, I'll show you I have a finer soul than you. You keep her where her talent has no chance to bloom; I'll release her from the bondage of the eating house."

Samuels whisked a legal document from his pocket and threw it on the table. "Here," he said, "is my engagement present."

It was the contract. The composer seized it with greedy fingers. Lest Samuels change his mind, he tore it into bits and threw the fragments out of the window. They fluttered in the air a moment and then were carried away on a gust of wind.

"Now you're free, free!" he cried gleefully to the daughter. "You're free to rise to the position to which you are entitled."

"My position is with Julius," Ruth responded decisively.

"And she will show Bauer what a truly great musician she is," baited Julius, fearful the father would think it was his intention to keep her in the restaurant.

"I have shown that my heart is not made of stone, like yours," said Samuels. "I have shown I'm not the selfish one."

Alchewski's bent form tried to straighten itself. He was gulping hard; the heaving of his chest was eloquent of the emotions struggling within him.

"Father," cooed Ruth, throwing her arms about his neck, "why do you want to make me unhappy?"

He looked down at his daughter, a great tenderness gradually creeping into his eyes. "I can be as unselfish as Samuels," he said finally, implanting a kiss on her forehead. "It isn't for the father to make his child unhappy."

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RAILROAD SUPERSTITIONS

By Thaddeus S. Dayton

THE superstitions of mariners are as old as the sea. Those of the land sailors, the railroad men, date back only a few years. They are new in their application, but of immemorial age as to their origin. It makes the average railroader indignant if he is asked if he has any special credulity or prejudice. He is sure to answer no; but he is almost equally certain to tell you of some one he knows in some engine or train crew who carries some fetish of my Lady Luck, or who believes in the occult influence of trivial things.

Thirteen has been an ominous number for years. There is not an engine numbered thirteen on any railroad in the United States. No locomotive works in America will put the finishing touches on an engine or complete it entirely on a Friday or the thirteenth of the month. Even on rush orders the great machines have to be made ready for delivery some other day.

Nine is the number that locomotive engineers consider even more dangerous than thirteen. There was an engineer on one of the Michigan divisions of the Grand Trunk some years ago, a daredevil runner, though he never had an accident. He feared one thing above all else, the number nine. He never took out an engine but once that bore that numeral.

On that occasion his own locomotive had needed some trifling repairs and he and his fireman had worked all day before getting it into shape. When they left the roundhouse at night everything about it was oiled and polished to perfection, ready to take out the fast passenger train at four the next morning. But when they came to hitch on something was found the matter with the coupling. There was no time to fix it. An almost new engine, No. 999, was the only available substitute. The engineer who had such a superstitious fear of the number nine refused pointblank at first to take this one out; but as no other locomotive or engineer could be secured at such short notice he had to go.

Two hours later, in the dawn of a winter morning, just as they were approaching a

small station at full speed (the train made no stop there), the engineer thought he saw the headlight of another locomotive on the track ahead. It was snowing hard and the wind was blowing a gale. He started to reverse his engine; but as he did so what had seemed to be the white gleam of a headlight grew smaller, flickered, and disappeared. Thinking it was one of the track signals that had become obscured by the snow and that the line was clear, he sent the engine forward at full speed again. A moment later there flashed into view a freight train dead ahead, but still some distance away, just taking the siding.

The passenger engineer reversed and yelled to his fireman to jump. On the fireman's side of the cab was a maze of tracks; on the other the way was clear. The fireman crossed the cab; but hesitated a moment before he swung himself from the bottom step. This fraction of a second's delay was fatal for the engineer. His foot tripped on the fireman's shoulder as he tried to jump from the floor of the cab and he was thrown headlong, breaking his neck and dying instantly. The fireman escaped without a scratch; but several lost their lives in the wreck that followed.

Another combination of numbers considered highly unlucky for an engine is 1111, "eleventy-leven." These four ones are looked upon with as much disfavor by all engineers as the three nines.

If an engine behaves well the first time out, if her maiden trip when she comes fresh from the shops is smooth and without mishap, she is looked upon with approval. She is regarded as trustworthy as a well broken though spirited horse; but when she has her first accident and thereafter during her entire career the superstition is that her mishaps will come in groups of three. This trilogy of accidents is so frequent that it is no wonder it has become an almost universal belief.

Trivial things in railroading are either lucky or unlucky. It is bad luck to turn an engine to the left when it is backed out of the roundhouse